New faces already have big plans

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Body

Nine new faces will be serving on Toronto council this term - seven newbies and two who are returning after sitting out a term.

The majority of the nine are visible minorities, tilting council towards a better representation of the city it serves.

Ward 10 (Spadina-Fort York) winner Ausma Malik said she's excited council now includes more women, people of colour and more people who have lived downtown.

"What I'm also really excited about is to be able to demonstrate that we can have progressive and responsive representation on city council," she said.

Community activist Amber Morley scored a big upset, taking Ward 3 (Etobicoke-Lakeshore) from long-time councillor Mark Grimes.

She said the first thing she'll do at city hall is assemble a top-notch support team.

"I'll be looking to hire the best quality team I can possibly pull together, folks who have some city hall experience, but also know the community and are as passionate about it as I am," said Morley.

Alejandra Bravo, a community advocate who won Ward 9 (Davenport), said residents are concerned about affordable housing and improving transit, and recognize that both those things are connected to climate action.

She said that with the province taking control of development and mayors being given more powers, residents want councillors who are rooted in their communities and ready to push for a fair and affordable city.

"People are recognizing that it's never been more important to have a progressive voice at council, councillors who are going to be listening deeply," Bravo said.

This was Bravo's fifth run for office in the riding.

Like Morley, community activist Lily Cheng, who won Ward 18 (Willowdale), said she will focus on building a strong team and infrastructure, and will reach out to seasoned councillors for advice.

"The other piece is bringing all the community leaders together to hear from them and to create collaborative discussions about what they would like to see happen in the next four years," said Cheng.

Ward 11, (University-Rosedale), vacated by Mike Layton, was assured of a new councillor but at deadline the race between environmental and energy lawyer Dianne Saxe and school trustee Norm Di Pasquale was too close to call.

Chris Moise won Ward 13 (Toronto Centre), after it was vacated by Kristyn Wong-Tam, now an MPP.

Moise said a priority will be to ensure that the Downtown East Action Plan, developed to address problems in the area related to poverty, homelessness, housing, community safety, mental health and substance abuse, particularly opioid-related overdoses, is continued and replicated across the city.

He also wants to make sure the yongeTOmorrow plan is implemented, even in the face of budgetary constraints. The design concept includes wider sidewalks and separated cycling lanes between College and Gerrard Streets.

"It's a priority," said Moise, a school board trustee, former vice-chair of the TDSB and a former hospital health care worker and police officer.

Jamaal Myers won Ward 23 (Scarborough North) after incumber Cynthia Lai died on Friday, at the end of her first term in office.

Myers said his first priority is addressing the issues being raised by the redevelopment of two local malls - Woodside Square Shopping Centre and Malvern Town Centre.

Myers said the Malvern Town Centre provides important shopping and services for residents, including a bank, and shouldn't simply be torn down for condos.

"That would be a tremendous loss for this community," he said.

Jon Burnside is returning to council after a hiatus of one term, to representWard 16 (Don Valley East).

He believes voters have become disenchanted with government and he wants to bring people in the ward together to find solutions to the issues they are facing.

Vincent Crisanti easily took Ward 1 (Etobicoke North), returning to office after sitting on the sidelines for a term.

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